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## **1 Introduction**

This document is designed to capture the basic evidence and information gathered from which to build the Neighbourhood Development Plan for the village of Lavenham and is primarily focused on the environment, land classification and uses.

## **2 Landscape**

Lavenham, an almost unspoilt example of a mediaeval town is charmingly situated on the crown and side of an eminence, west of a pretty valley in which flows the Brad, a tributary of the River Brett" wrote Lingard Ranson in 1950".

The landscape is gently undulating comprising boulder clay soils over chalk which has resulted in land of high agricultural quality. Hedges with hedgerow trees and small areas of woodland break up the fields surrounding the village. Watercourses create the grain of the landscape separated by higher undulating land, which offer slopes to the streambeds. These winding watercourses are often lined with wooded bank vegetation contributing to the varied the varied patchwork of ecological community types as well as the visual appeal of the countryside.

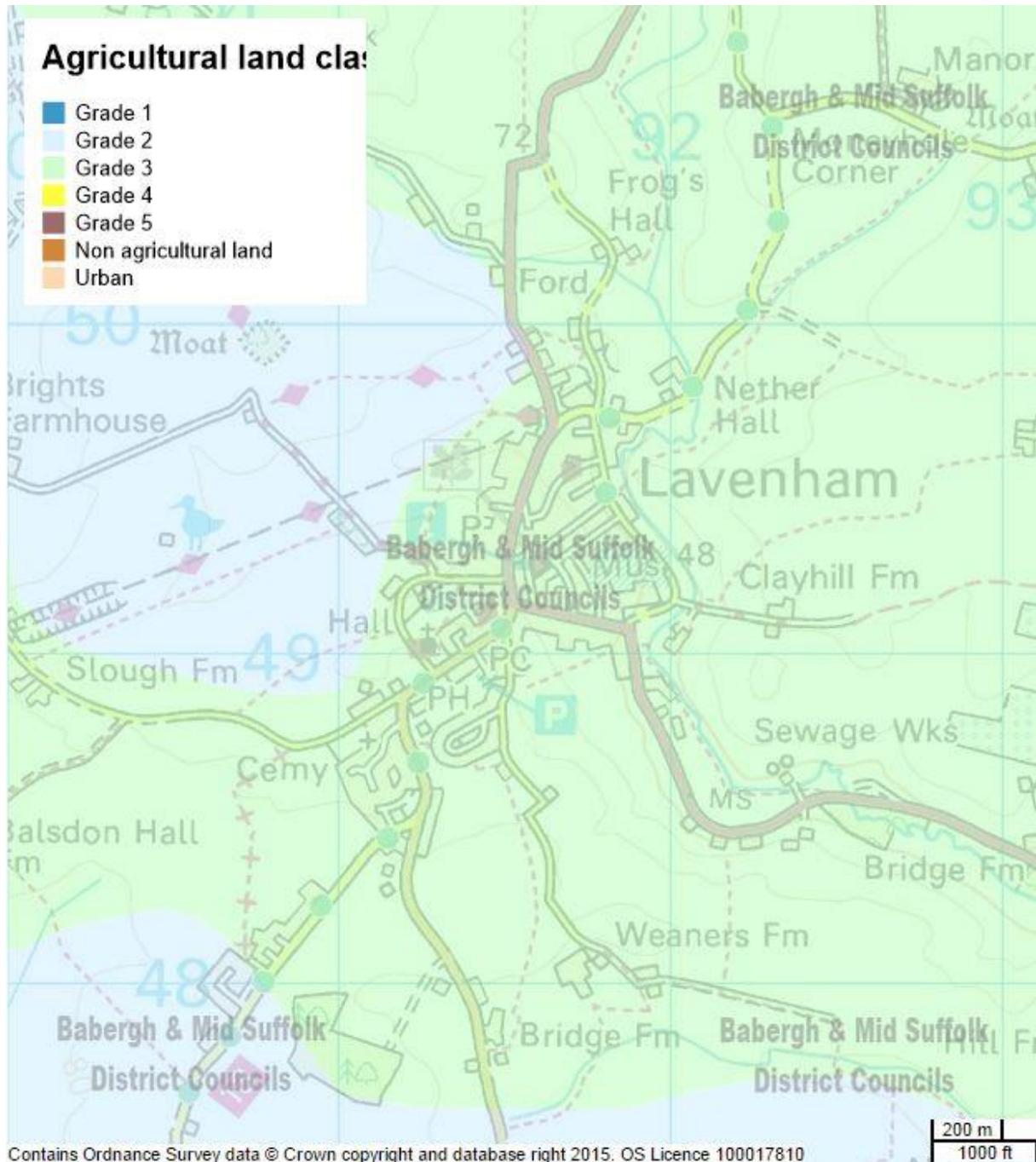
This is an attractive landscape of high visual quality and Lavenham's countryside setting contributes to the amenity value of the village and provides the background for the important views into and out from the settlement. Public footpaths connect the village with the countryside and provide key visual and physical links between village and country.

## **3 Land classification and agriculture**

Chalky boulder clay of the Hanslope and Ragdale Series extends over the whole of the Parish being composed of a matrix of grey clay containing pieces of Lias and Kimmeridge limestone, flint and chalk fragments. Small outcrops of gravel deposits and chalky silts are to be found in the valley bottoms and brickearth emerges near Lower Road. The MAFF (1998) Agriculture Land Classification indicates that there are areas of Grades 2 and 3 soils in the Parish. Grade 2 (very good agricultural land) accounts for some 25% of the area with the remainder Grade 3 (good to moderate quality agricultural land). The higher quality land is situated north of the old railway line running towards Lavenham Park Farm and south of Bridge Farm.

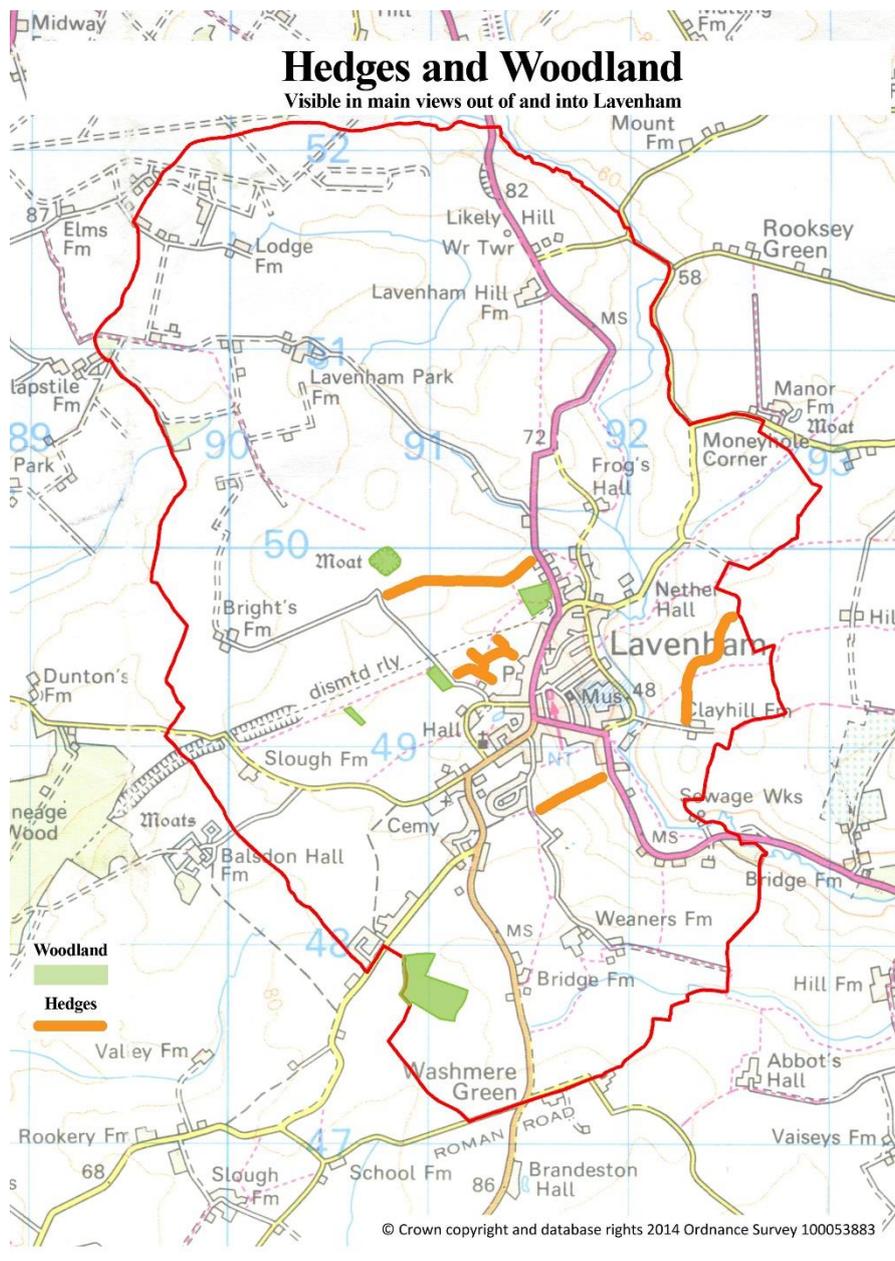
It is estimated that some 80% is cropped with cereal production predominating within rotations which include sugar beet, field beans and oilseed rape. Small areas of permanent grassland are mainly situated adjacent to the village where it is used for sheep and horse grazing and forms an important element of the outstanding views into and out from Lavenham

**Agricultural Land Classification**



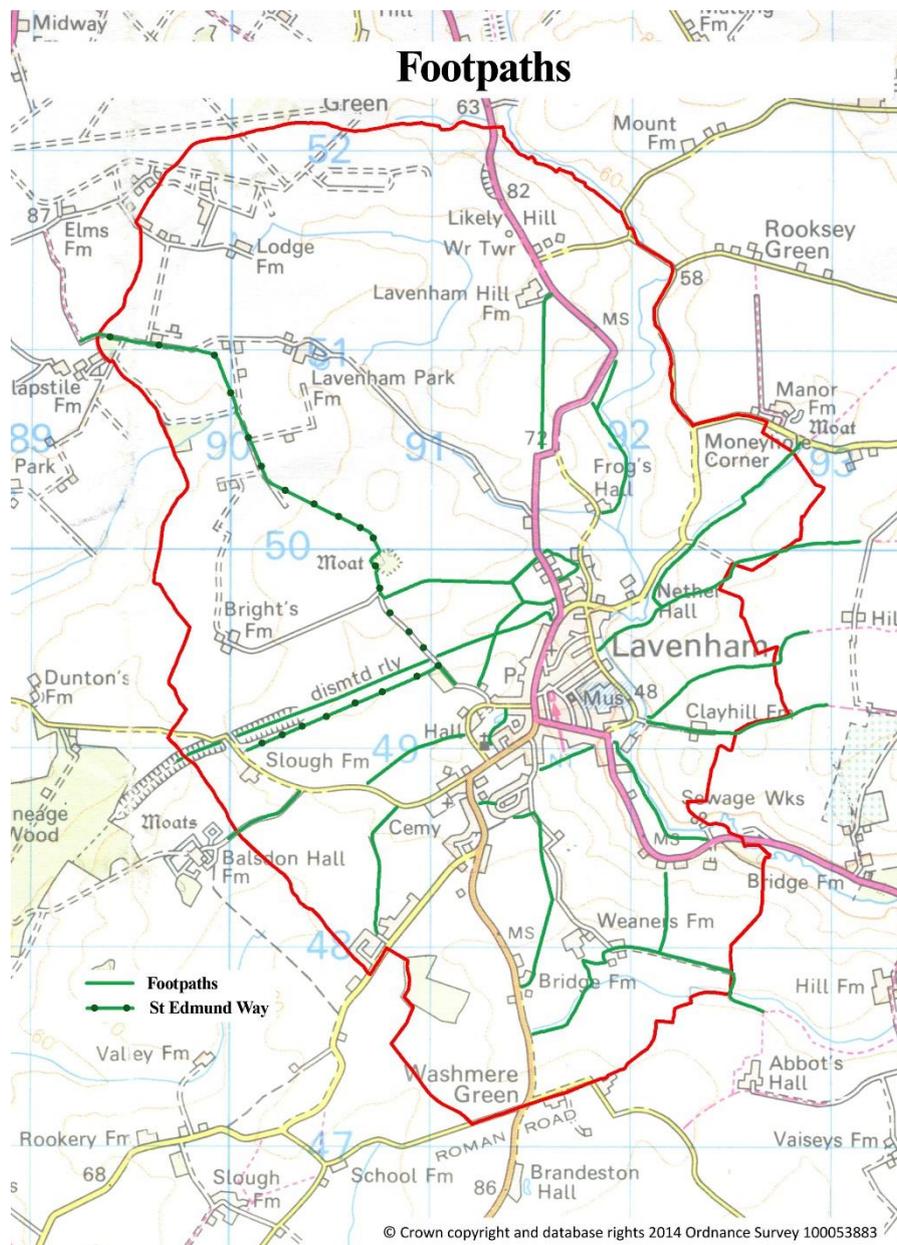
#### 4 Hedges and woodland

The landscape of the Parish is fortunate in that the field boundaries in the main are still adequately defined by hedges, ditches and small areas of woodland. Whilst many of the hedges are in good condition, some of the most significant which form an important element of the defined views into and out from Lavenham require sympathetic management and in particular gapping up to maintain continuous lines which emphasise the land form. The small areas of woodland are valuable landscape features tying the landform to hedge lines and framing viewpoints. Many of these blocks of woodland require ongoing management.



## 5 Footpaths

Lavenham has an excellent network of public footpath including the Railway Walk managed by the Suffolk County Council. Views of Lavenham, which include the dominant church tower, are a material element in the pleasure obtained by those using the paths. The St Edmunds Way, a cross Suffolk footpath which runs from Flatford to Brandon (88miles) utilises the Railway Walk from Long Melford to Park Road then turns north-west and leaves the Parish west of Lavenham Park Farm. The continuing maintenance of the footpaths and in particular the Railway Walk is essential for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors to the village.



An error in the route of the St Edmund Way has been pointed out. The route is correctly shown on the Ordnance Survey maps and is described in the book "The St Edmund Way" as follows:

(coming from the Melford direction) the route tracks the course of the former railway all the way to Lavenham. .... Pass under a road bridge [on Bridge Street Road] and carry on as far as the next road\*. [Park Road] go up the slope here and turn right up the hill into Lavenham, keeping left at the junction to go down Hall Street (sic). At the end of the large garden on the right take the earth path down to a footbridge and half right over pasture into the churchyard. From the church turn left down to The Swan, go right down Water Street and then left up Lady Street into the Market Place. Cross the Market Place and go down Prentice Street, then turn left at the bottom and left again at the crossroads. At the T junction just ahead, turn right up over a road bridge and climb to the stile [no longer there] on the left at the end of the bridge parapet. Descend steps and follow the field boundary ahead. After bending right and left, turn right to use a path across the narrowest part of the field close to overhead cables. At the upper boundary, go left to follow the field edge path to the end and there turn right. Almost immediately, leave the road [Park Road] at a sharp bend to keep straight on along a grass track (the remaining route is shown correctly on the Neighbourhood Plan map on page 38)

\* note this is the route of the railway NOT the footpath running alongside is as shown on the map on page 38

## 6 Historical features in the Parish

### Second World War Pill Boxes

11 Pill Boxes are situated within the Parish. These formed part of the Eastern Command Line defence during the Second World War, (Dymond & Martin 1999).

### Manor Moat

Site of the De Veres' (Lords of the Manor) Manor House, (Lingard Ranson 1950).

### Saxon Boundary (Acton Will)

The present Parish Boundary follows the ancient Saxon line from Linage Wood past Balsdon Hall Farm to near School Farm Lane, (Scarf 1972).

### Mediaeval Deer Park Boundary

Follows the Parish Boundary north of Bright's Farm to the disused airfield. It is of interest to note that apart from a section on Clay Hill, the Parish boundary appears to be identical to that in 1597, (Melford Estate Maps 1580 and 1613, Alpheton Parish Perambulation 1688, Lavenham Parish Perambulation 1596).

### Roman Road

The southern Parish boundary follows the line of a Roman road along School Farm Lane.

### Palaeolithic Site

Finds of hippopotamus tusks, rhinoceros molars, deer teeth and caudal vertebrae of either elephant or rhinoceros, adjacent to Lower Road (Wymer 1985).

### Bright's Drift

The Drift is the turning at the top of Park Road and is probably the "Oxford Way" mentioned in sundry deeds (Lingard Ranson 1950).

### Lodge Farm

Find of Roman Urn containing silver of 13 different Emperors (Lingard Ranson 1950).

### Sites of Elm Pollard and Gospel Oak

It is likely that these pollards defined the Parish boundary in the mediaeval period. The Gospel Oak (Map of Long Melford 1820) may well have played a part in the Parish Perambulation. It is thought that the site of the Elm Pollard is shown on the Great Eastern Railway Plan.

### Tudor Culverts

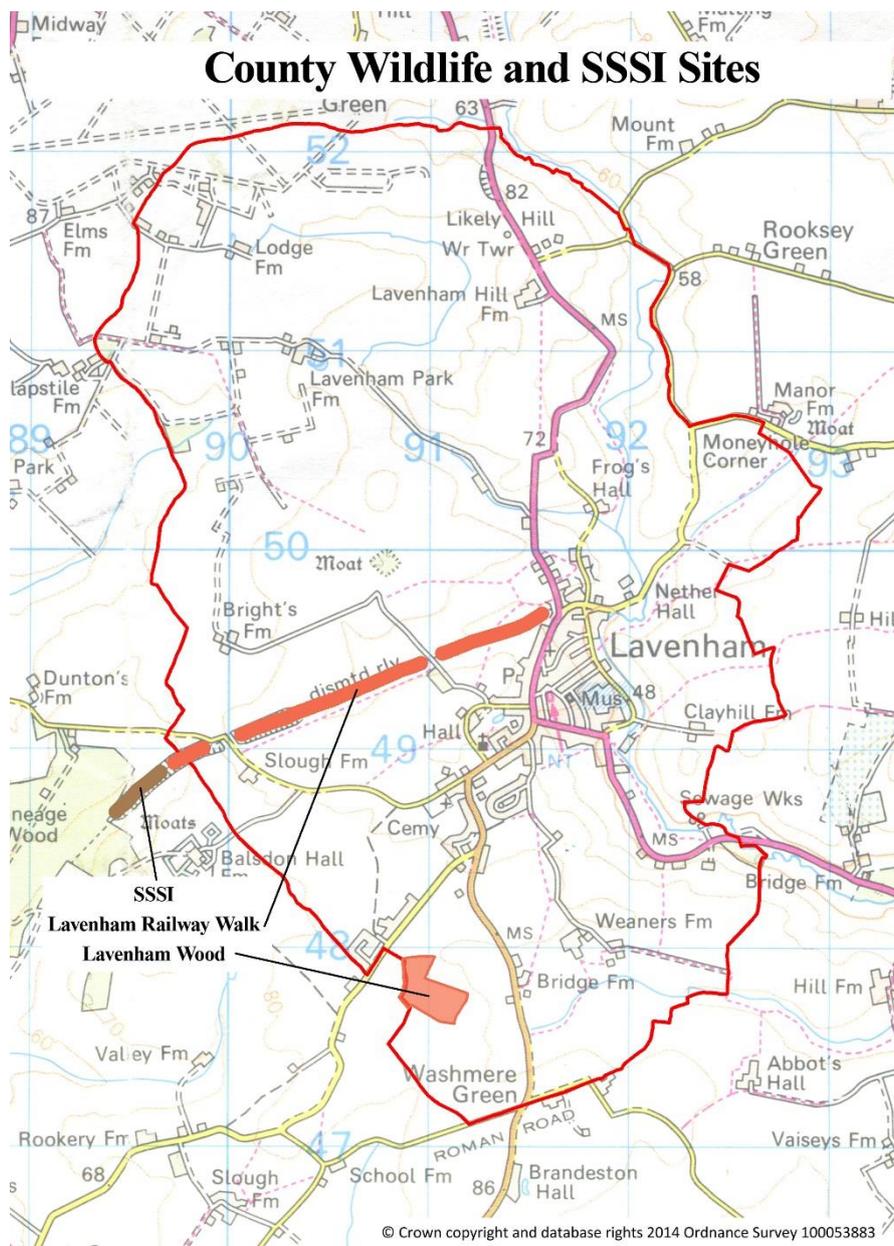
Around 1500 the decision was made to divert the open street water streams into underground culverts. The main Tudor culvert is in Water Street and serves today as a storm drain being around four feet high and between two and three feet wide, constructed of Tudor brick and lime mortar. They are now owned by the Water Authority and are undoubtedly of national as well as local significance. English Heritage has been asked to consider listing the main culvert in Water Street.



## 8 Wildlife and countryside designations

### Local Nature Reserves

Lavenham Walk is a 2-mile-long ex railway line. The wildlife habitat is particularly important for chalk grassland and butterflies, and forms an important semi-natural habitat in an otherwise farmed landscape. Part of the sit, between Bridge Street and Lineage Wood, forms part of the Lineage Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The remainder of the site is a County Wildlife Site. The whole site forms a popular walk on the edge of Lavenham.



### Site of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are important as they support plants and animals that find it difficult to survive elsewhere in the countryside, and they represent the country's best wildlife and geological sites. SSSI are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Lineage wood & railway track SSSI: Lineage Wood (formerly known as Lavenham and Acton Woods and Old Railway Track) is one of the largest (59 ha.) remaining ancient woods in west Suffolk. Despite coniferization, the wood has retained a good system of floristically rich unimproved neutral grassland rides. Small remnants of the original wet Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* – Wych Elm *Ulmus minor*, Lineage elm variant, are found in nearby Hawks Grove and alongside the disused railway track unimproved calcareous grassland is also found on chalky boulder clay of the railway track.

### Environmental Sensitive Areas (Suffolk River Valleys)

Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) are one of a range of agri-environment schemes operating under the England Rural Development Programme. Incentives are offered to farmers to adopt agricultural practices which will safeguard and enhance parts of the country of particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. The ESA has no planning status and therefore cannot be used as a reason for refusing planning applications.

### Countryside Project Area (Stour Valley)

The Countryside Project Area is a desired area set out by the Stour Valley and Dedham Vale AONB as an area of value but it does not have any Planning status and therefore cannot be used as a reason for refusing planning applications.

### Special Protection Areas

A Special Protection Area (SPA) is the land classified under Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds. The nearest SPA, the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA (23km to the south east of Lavenham) contains an internationally important assemblage of birds. Qualifying species include; Avocet (breeding), Northern pintail *Anas acuta* (wintering), Dark-bellied Brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla* (wintering), Red knot *Calidris canutus* (wintering), Black-tailed godwit (Icelandic) *Limosa limosa islandica* (wintering), Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (wintering), and Redshank *Tringa totanus* (wintering and passage). The vulnerability of the SPA is affected by pressure for increased port development and marine recreation in this area including tourism.

### Special Areas of Conservation

A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is the land designated under Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. The nearest, the Rex Graham Reserve SAC (26km to the north west of Lavenham), hosts the priority habitat type "orchid rich sites". This is a disused chalk pit with developing dry grassland characterised by false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. The site has been selected as it supports the largest population of military orchid *Orchis militaris* in the UK, comprising more than 95% of the current total population.

### Ramsar Sites

A Ramsar site is the land listed as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) 1973. The nearest Ramsar (23km to the south east of Lavenham), the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Ramsar includes extensive mud-flats, low cliffs, saltmarsh and small areas of vegetated shingle on the lower reaches. The site supports important numbers of breeding Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, while in winter they hold major concentrations of waterbirds, especially geese, ducks and waders. The geese also feed, and waders roost, in surrounding areas of agricultural land outside of the area. The vulnerability of the Ramsar is affected by natural coastal processes exacerbated by fixed sea defences, port development and maintenance dredging.

### Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dedham Vale)

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated areas where protection is afforded to protect and manage the areas for visitors and local residents. The nearest AONB is the Dedham Vale AONB (10km south east of Lavenham). Much of East Anglia's traditional grasslands have already been drained and ploughed for arable farming, so the hedgerows and wildflower meadows of the Dedham Vale AONB are among some of England's most precious and vulnerable pastoral landscapes.

### County Wildlife Sites

County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) play a key role in the conservation of Suffolk's biodiversity. Suffolk has over 900 County Wildlife Sites, amounting to 19,200 hectares and covering 5% of the county. County Wildlife Site designation is non-statutory, but it recognises the high value of a site for wildlife. Many sites are of county, and often regional or national, importance. They are often designated because they support characteristic or threatened species or habitats included in Local or National Biodiversity Action Plans. CWSs have been identified throughout Suffolk and range from small meadows, green lanes, dykes and hedges through to much larger areas of ancient woodlands, heathland, greens, commons and marsh.

Outside of statutorily protected designations (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local and National Nature Reserves), CWSs are one of the most important areas for wildlife in Suffolk.

CWSs are recognised by national planning policy as having a fundamental role to play in meeting national biodiversity targets. CWSs are not protected by legislation, but their importance is recognised by local authorities when considering any relevant planning applications and there is a presumption against granting permission for development that would have an adverse impact on a site. Such measures have been strengthened by the provisions of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 which requires all public bodies to 'have regard for' the conservation of biodiversity. Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) monitors planning applications for any potential impact on County Wildlife Sites.

### Special Landscape Areas

The adopted Babergh Local Plan (2006) Saved Policies designates significant areas of the district's landscape as 'Special Landscape Areas', particularly the river valleys. Given the status of these as a local level designation and as an inherently site specific matter, it is not considered appropriate for these to be addressed within the Core Strategy and Policies document. Adopted and saved Local Plan Policy CR04 therefore remains extant at this point in time. A review of the SLA approach, including whether to retain this designation and if so, which areas should be covered, will be dealt with in the subsequent Site Allocations or Development Management Policies document.

### Areas of visual or recreational value

Babergh Local Plan (2006) - Important open spaces, and areas of visual or recreational value are identified in Villages in the context of the Built-Up Area Boundaries. These locations are referred to as Areas of Visual and/or Recreational Amenity (AVRA). Like the BUABs, AVRAs were introduced in the 1995 Supplementary Planning Guidance for villages in the District and were incorporated into the 2006 Local Plan.

## 9 Significant views-considerations

### Identified Significant Views into and out from Lavenham

The location of fourteen identified significant views were drawn from original survey work undertaken by a local Countryside Group in 2000 which formed the basis of the aims for safe guarding the important views which were subsequently incorporated in the approved Lavenham Design Statement 2002. This original work assisted a group of parishioners to confirm these fourteen views as potentially significant and formed part of a Neighbourhood Plan Workshop held in March 2014 for the residents of Lavenham. Residents were asked to prioritise the fourteen views shown on photographs and maps and from their local knowledge indicate those that they considered should be protected from future development using the from which was based the views on a range of 1 to 5 with 1 being very important to 5 the least important.

The results from the Workshop survey by Lavenham residents are shown at Appendix B and clearly indicate the importance of retaining and protecting the main identified views giving priority to the views relating to Prentice Street followed in descending order to Bury Road. It was considered that two views with low scores Clayhill and Bury Road could be removed and also the view of the Church West Door as being a virtual duplication of Bridge Street Road. In subsequent examination of the significant views it was clear that Nether Hall Farm (9) should be included as being of particular importance looking across Lavenham towards the Church.

At the Workshops held in March 2014 a spread of views into and out of the village were displayed. Residents were asked to prioritise the views that they considered necessary to protect. The outcome of this exercise is shown as below.

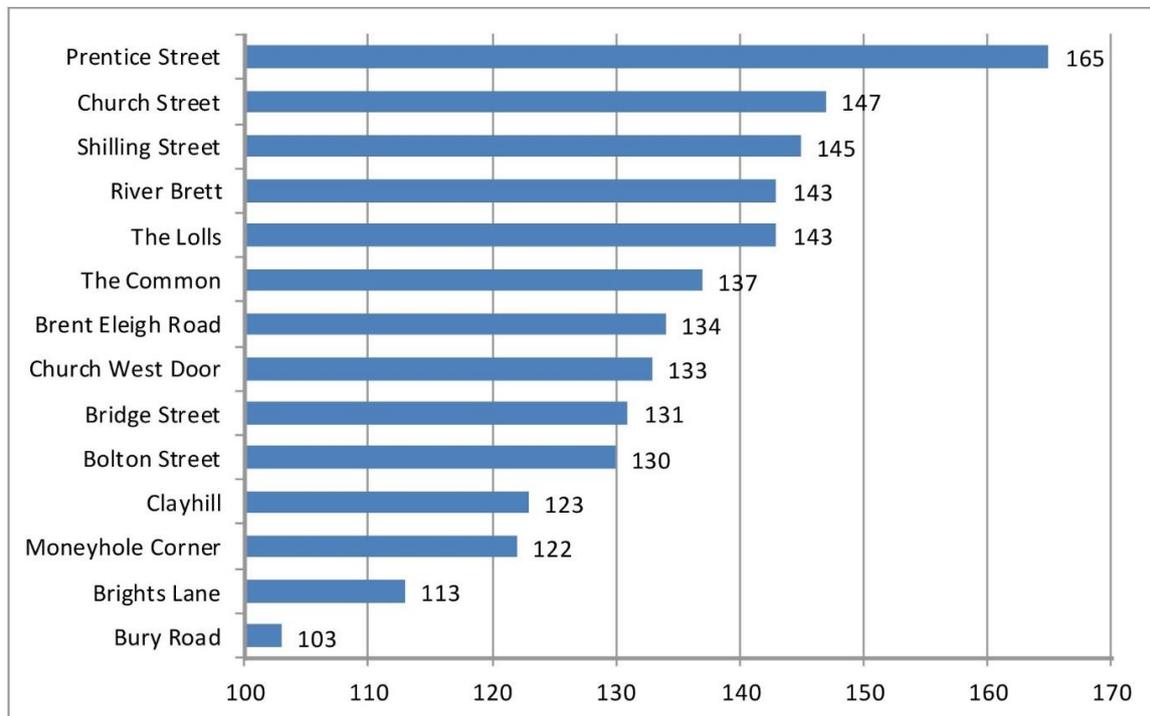
**YOUR OPINION IS IMPORTANT**  
**PLEASE COMPLETE AND LEAVE IN BOX**

The 14 photographs on the board show the proposed defined views which are considered to be significant for safeguarding the historic setting of Lavenham in the countryside.

Please grade each photograph on the range of 1 to 5 with 1 being very important to 5 being the least important.

		VERY IMPORTANT				LEAST IMPORTANT
1	Moneyhole Corner	1	2	3	4	5
2	Clayhill	1	2	3	4	5
3	Brent Eleigh Road	1	2	3	4	5
4	Bury Road	1	2	3	4	5
5	Brights Lane	1	2	3	4	5
6	Bridge Street	1	2	3	4	5
7	Church West Door	1	2	3	4	5
8	Bolton Street	1	2	3	4	5
9	The Common	1	2	3	4	5
10	The Lolls	1	2	3	4	5
11	Prentice Street	1	2	3	4	5
12	Shilling Street	1	2	3	4	5
13	Church Street	1	2	3	4	5
14	River Brett	1	2	3	4	5

### Outcomes



## 10 References

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- BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL Lavenham Conservation Appraisal 2009
- BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL Map of Listed Buildings in Lavenham Scale 1:2500
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